

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 144 967

TM 006 463

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TITLE Interpersonal Communications Inventory: A Need Assessment of the Communication Skill Competencies of Educational Personnel Attending In-Service Training Activities Conducted by the Cherokee Bilingual Project, Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Final Report.
INSTITUTION Hackbert and Associates, Norman, Okla.
PUB DATE Mar 75
NOTE 31 p.
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Personnel; Behavior Patterns; Bilingual Schools; Boards of Education; *Communication Skills; Counselors; *Diagnostic Tests; Elementary Secondary Education; Human Relations Programs; Inservice Teacher Education; *Interpersonal Competence; *Listening Skills; Needs Assessment; *Teacher Aides; *Teacher Behavior; Teacher Characteristics; Teacher Interns; *Teachers
IDENTIFIERS *Interpersonal Communication Inventory

ABSTRACT

The Interpersonal Communications Inventory (ICI), developed by Bienvenu, identifies and compares the communication patterns, characteristics, styles, and processes of educational personnel. One hundred forty-three individuals, most of whom were teachers or teacher aides from bilingual schools in six school districts in northeastern Oklahoma, participated in the project. The ICI was administered during an inservice training workshop. This 40-item scale measured the process of communication as an element of social interaction; in particular, the individual's ability to listen, to empathize, to understand, to manage angry feelings, to express oneself, and to communicate skillfully were explored. The results indicated that interpersonal communication skill competencies were held highest by teachers, then by administrators, and finally, by teacher aides. Teachers responded highest to self concept and clarity of expression, while they scored lower than counselors, administrators, and interns in listening skills, coping with feelings, and self disclosure. The teacher aide group held the lowest scores on all six criterion variables. (MV)

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March 1975

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INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS INVENTORY:
A Need Assessment of the Communication
Skill Competencies of Educational
Personnel Attending In-Service Training
Activities Conducted by the
Cherokee Bilingual Project, Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Peter H. Hackbert
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INTRODUCTION

Being an effective educator is based on five interpersonal communication components: (1) an adequate self-concept, the single most important factor affecting people's communication with others; (2) the ability to be a good listener, a skill which has received little attention until recently; (3) the skill of expressing one's thoughts and ideas clearly--which many people find difficult to do; (4) being able to cope with one's emotions, particularly angry feelings, and expressing them in a constructive way; and (5) the willingness to disclose oneself to others truthfully and freely.

The need assessment identifies and compares the patterns, characteristics, styles and processes of groups of educational personnel. In other words, "this is how teachers and teacher-aids relate to students" or a diagnostic inventory evaluating particular communication subskills to identify weaknesses and abilities. It is, therefore, a study of the general tendencies of interpersonal communication skill competencies. Like all forms of evaluation, this diagnosis involves a valuing, determination, description and classification of aspects of teacher behavior.

This research is relevant to a number of issues in the general area of social interaction and communication. These will be briefly explored below as background for the presentation of the research results.

In marriage counseling, parent-child counseling, group therapy and small-group communication research, several research techniques and devices have been developed to assess a number of interpersonal phenomena. Navran (1967) developed the Primary Communication Inventory to examine the relationships of marital communication and marital adjustment. Quality of husband-wife communication, including nonverbal communication, was assessed with a 25-item self-report questionnaire. Kahn's (1970) Marital Communication Scale of the accuracy of nonverbal marital communication requires mates to communicate a standard set of messages in face-to-face situations. Sensitivities to speech patterns and thresholds of verbalization in marital dyads according to questionnaire reports by children were described by Shipman (1960). Hobart and Klausner (1959) produced a scale of empathic communication and barriers to husband-wife communication. Finally, Bienvenu (1970a) Marital Communication Inventory identified the following elements differentiating good and poor communication: handling of anger and differences, tone of voice, understanding, listening habits and self-disclosure.

Similar attempts have been made to understand parent-adolescent communication. Bienvenu (1969) isolated the variables of trust, listening, freedom of expression, understanding, acceptance, lack of criticism and sarcasm as being associated with parent-adolescent communication. Dubbé's (1957) questionnaire asked high school students to identify the topics that they found most difficult to discuss with their parents.

Earle (1967) examined the relationship between communication effectiveness and emotional attachment in adolescents and their parents. Larson (1970) contributed three related scales: Self-Disclosure Readiness Scale, Parent-Adolescent Conversation Scale, and the Mode of Communication Scale--all of which yielded data on correlations with communication effectiveness. Jourard (1964) used his Self Disclosure Questionnaire in a correlational study of communication effectiveness in family and interpersonal relations.

More briefly, Loeffler, Berdie and Roth (1969) have researched parent-youth communication; Truax (1968) properties of interpersonal interaction in group psychotherapy; Read's (1968) studies of industrial communication and Ferullo (1963) self-conception communication.

A review of this research suggests both a need and a means for developing an interpersonal communication inventory, applicable generally to social interaction of educational personnel in public schools.

The problem of this research is: What are the patterns, characteristics and styles of interpersonal communication of educational personnel attending human relations in-service training workshops sponsored by the Cherokee Bilingual Project, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, during 1974-75.

The research proposed to identify interpersonal components and communication skills of educational personnel.

The questions investigated were:

1. What are the nature, scope and frequency of interpersonal communication skills encountered by teachers, teacher-aids and other educational personnel?
2. How do the interpersonal communication skills of various educational personnel compare to national norms?
3. What are the nature, scope and frequency of interpersonal components making up communication skills of various educational personnel?

METHOD

A total of 143 men and women from six school districts in Northeastern, Oklahoma participated in this project. Three groups were defined in terms of respondents' position in the districts and were composed as follows: 4 school administrators, 1 counselor, 1 school board member, 6 student interns; 79 teachers; 52 teacher-aids. The first group had none to eight years school experience, varied in age from 21 to 55 and was 50% male. The second group had from one to 35 years school experience, varied in age from 21 to 63 years, and was 91% female. The third group had from one to eight years school experience, varied in age from 21 to 59 and was 100% female. Comparisons of demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

The Interpersonal Communication Inventory (ICI) was administered to the educational personnel in groups during in-service training workshops sponsored by the Cherokee

Bilingual Project, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in the school year 1974-75. The respondents completed the questionnaires anonymously as part of a human relations instrumentation activity. Data was collected at the close of the workshop. The questionnaires given to the three groups were identical in form and content. The 40-item scale developed by Bienvenu (1971) measured the process of communication as an element of social interaction. Intended not to measure content of communication, but to identify patterns, characteristics and styles of communication. Among other things, the individual's ability to listen, to empathize, to understand, to handle his angry feelings, to express himself and his conversational attributes were explored. The ICI is a self-inventory which asks respondents to check one of three possible responses, "Usually," "Sometimes," and "Seldom." Responses to the items were scored from zero to three with a favorable response given the higher score.

The items were formulated from a review of the literature and from Bienvenu's experience with communication scales and counseling experience. Face validity was established by presenting items to sociologists, psychologists and specialists in the fields of human relations. Consensus was that items were relevant to interpersonal communication. Each of the items were reviewed by groups of graduate and undergraduate students to make sure items were understandable. Split-half reliability significantly discriminates between upper of lower quantities ($P < .01$) of subjects identified

as good and bad communicators (Bienvenu, 1971). The instrument which requires a 7th grade reading ability was adaptable for either sex, to various ethnic groupings, to any marital status, and relates solely to the individual and his interactions with other individuals.

RESULTS

The results showing overall interpersonal communication skill mean levels and five component mean levels of the three groups of educational personnel are found in Table 2, as well as national norms for the total inventory skill level. For the most part, the three groups differ in a consistent direction on each of the six variables. The teacher-aid group holds the lowest scores on all six criterion variables. Inspection of the group means shows that interpersonal communication skill competencies are held highest by teachers, then administrators, and finally by teacher-aids. When comparing group means to national norms, the teacher-aid group scores considerably lower than the other two groups.

The bottom half of Table 2 shows mean interpersonal component responses for each of the three groups. National norms are not available for comparison purposes. Again, teacher-aids consistently hold the lowest scores of the three groups. Teachers responded highest to self-concept and clarity of expression. In comparison, teachers scored lower in listening skills, coping with feelings and self-disclosure than does group 1.

For ease of analysis, graphic percentile curves, Figures 1-6, were prepared to compare the distributions of the three groups of unequal size. Figure 1 shows the distribution of total ICI scores for the three groups in the form of percentile curves. It is clear that although teachers have the highest average scores, the teacher-aids have greatest variability. This is evident since the upper half of the teacher-aids exceeds the upper half of the administrators, while the lower half of the teacher-aids falls behind the lower half of the administrators.

Figure 2 compares the distributions of the three groups in terms of the self-concept component. Again, teacher-aids show the greatest variability. Approximately 50% of the aids score at a percentile level much lower than either of the two other groups.

Figure 3 shows teachers having highest skills in clarity of expression, with teacher-aids responding the lowest.

Figure 4 compares the nature and frequency of listening skills of the three groups. The teacher group has the greatest variability. The teacher-aid group has the lowest average response.

Coping with feeling responses are displayed in Figure 5. The administrators group scores overall highest on this component. Again, teacher-aids have the highest variability, with teachers scoring as the middle group.

Finally, Figure 6 compares the averages and distributions of the self-disclosure component. No respondent

optimized the items related to self-disclosure. All groups scored lower than the total rate possible. Within each group, a bimodal distribution is evident. This suggests that there may be two distinct response sets operating within the inventory items.

DISCUSSION

This need assessment was an attempt to diagnose the general tendencies in interpersonal communication of groups of educational personnel. Communicative skill competencies and weaknesses were identified and compared across three groups of educational personnel.

The findings involving the six inventory scores are quite clear. The teacher-aid group consistently responded lowest of the three groups to all variables. As amount of formal education increased, educational personnel felt that their interpersonal communication skill levels increased. The difference between the teachers and administrators were minor.

Viewing this research as a need assessment of interpersonal communication skill competencies of educational personnel within a bilingual school and a bicultural framework, the following recommendations are made:

- (1) Educational personnel in bilingual, bicultural school settings must possess the prerequisite interpersonal communication skills which regulate social relationships.
- (2) As discrepancies in interpersonal communication skills become evident, resources should be applied to alleviate such discrepancies within these school settings.
- (3) Teacher-aids, by the nature of their role-model and functioning, need a significant amount of applied training even if they do not receive formal degrees.
- (4) Further communication and human relations training experiences and function with applicability across a broad range of paraprofessional and professional multi-cultural roles must teach a basic set of relationship building skills.
- (5) Further training programs should focus on the content of such of program (what is taught) and the manner in which the content is taught emphasizing three components:
 - a) an understanding of oneself
 - b) some knowledge of communication skills
 - c) experience in applying these skills
- 6) Further research and diagnostic evaluation designs, should be incorporated into ongoing educational program activities to identify weakness and abilities of personnel as programs continue in operation.

TABLE 1
Demographic Characteristics for Three Groups
of Educational Personnel

Variables	Administrators Counselor School Bd. Mem. Interns (N = 16)	Teachers (N = 79)	Teacher-Aids (N = 52)
Age	Mean 36.8	Mean 35.3	Mean 32.1
Sex	Male (50%)	Female (91%)	Female (100%)
Tenure	Not Obtained	11.1 years	4.6 years

TABLE 2
Mean Interpersonal Communication Skill Levels and Five
Interpersonal Component Levels for Groups of
Educational Personnel

Variables	Administrators Counselor School Bd. Mem. Interns (N = 16)	Teachers (N = 79)	Teacher-Aids (N = 52)	National Norms (N = 298)
Total Interpersonal Communication Inventory Skill Level	Mean 86.7	Mean 87.5	Mean 80.9	Mean 86.9
Five Components				
Self-Concept	9.7	9.9	9.3	*
Clarity of Expression	5.5	6.5	4.6	*
Listening	9.2	8.4	7.7	*
Coping with Feelings	9.5	8.8	8.4	*
Self-Disclosure	3.7	3.6	3.5	*

*Not Available

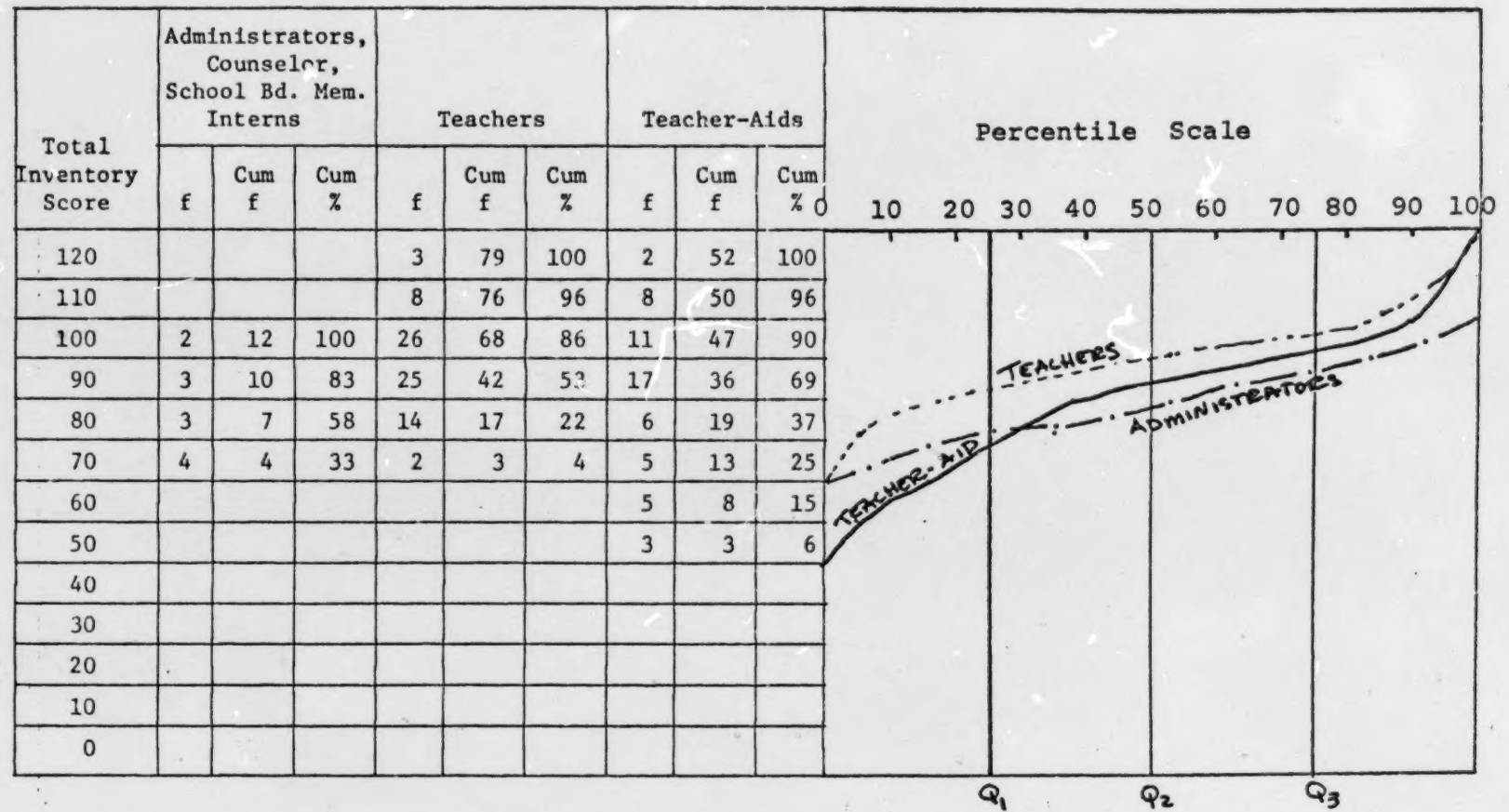


Figure 1. Total scores on Interpersonal Communication Inventory for groups of educational personnel.

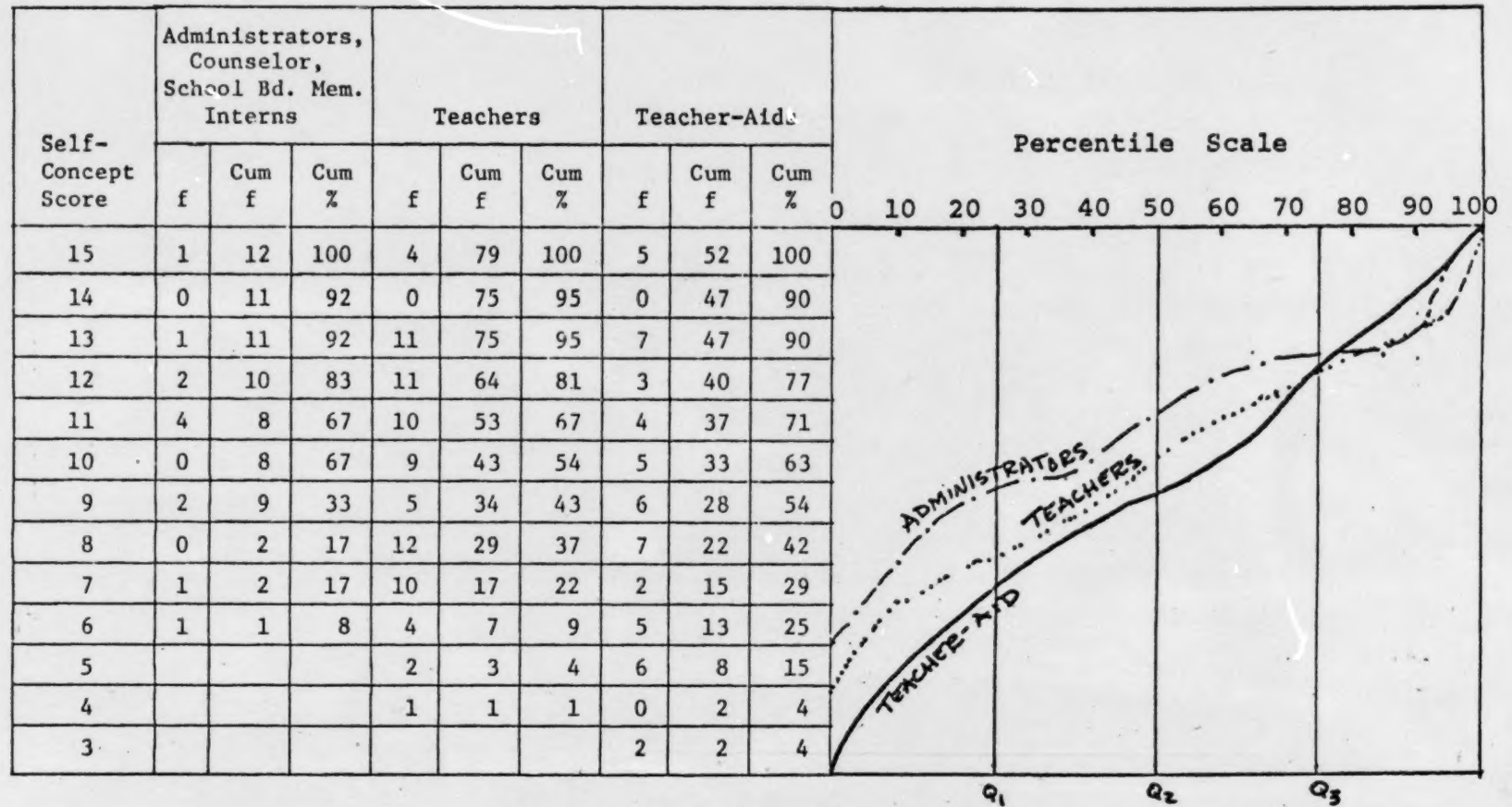


Figure 2. Total self-concept component score for groups of educational personnel.

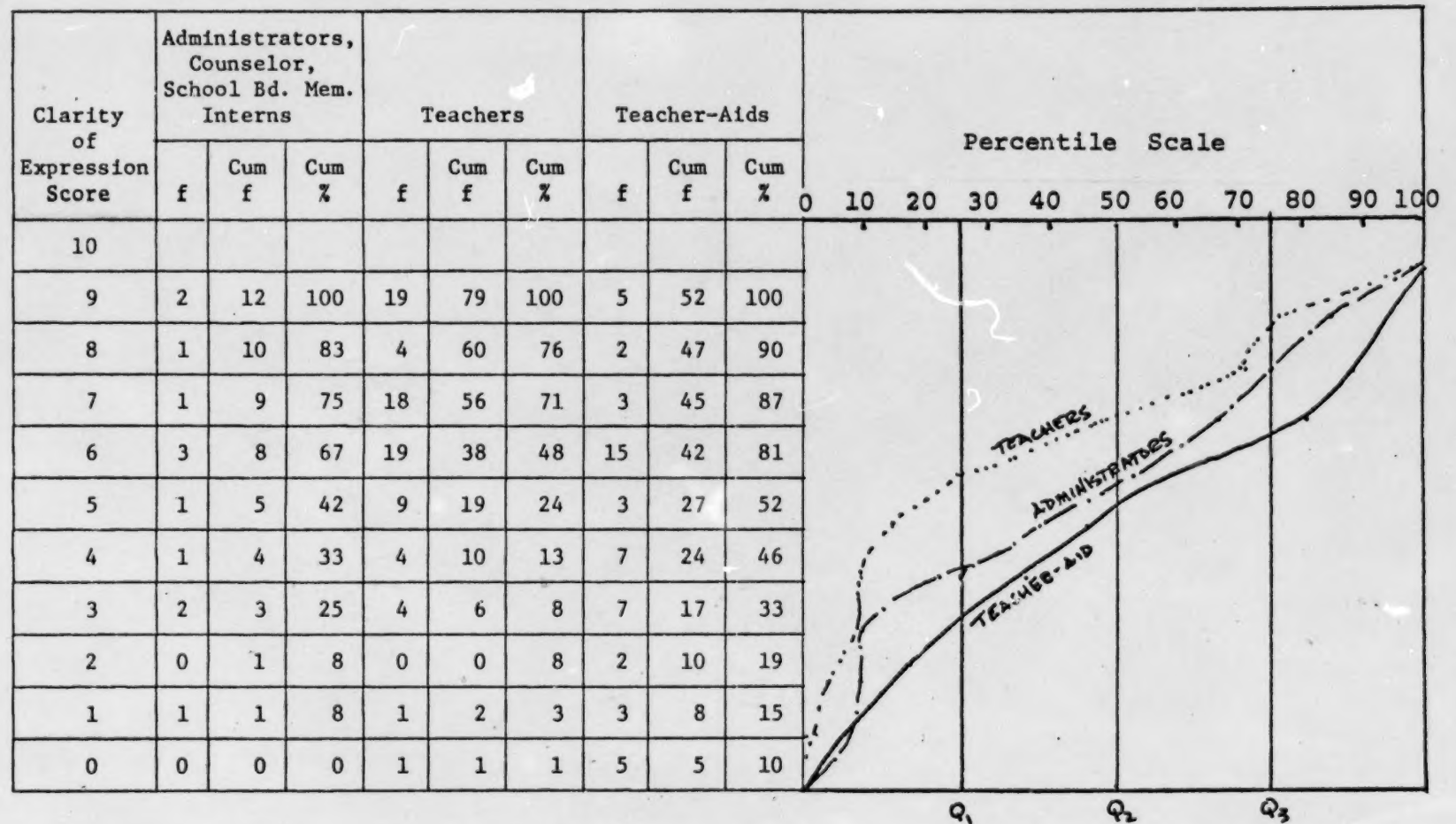


Figure 3. Total clarity of expression component scores for groups of educational personnel.

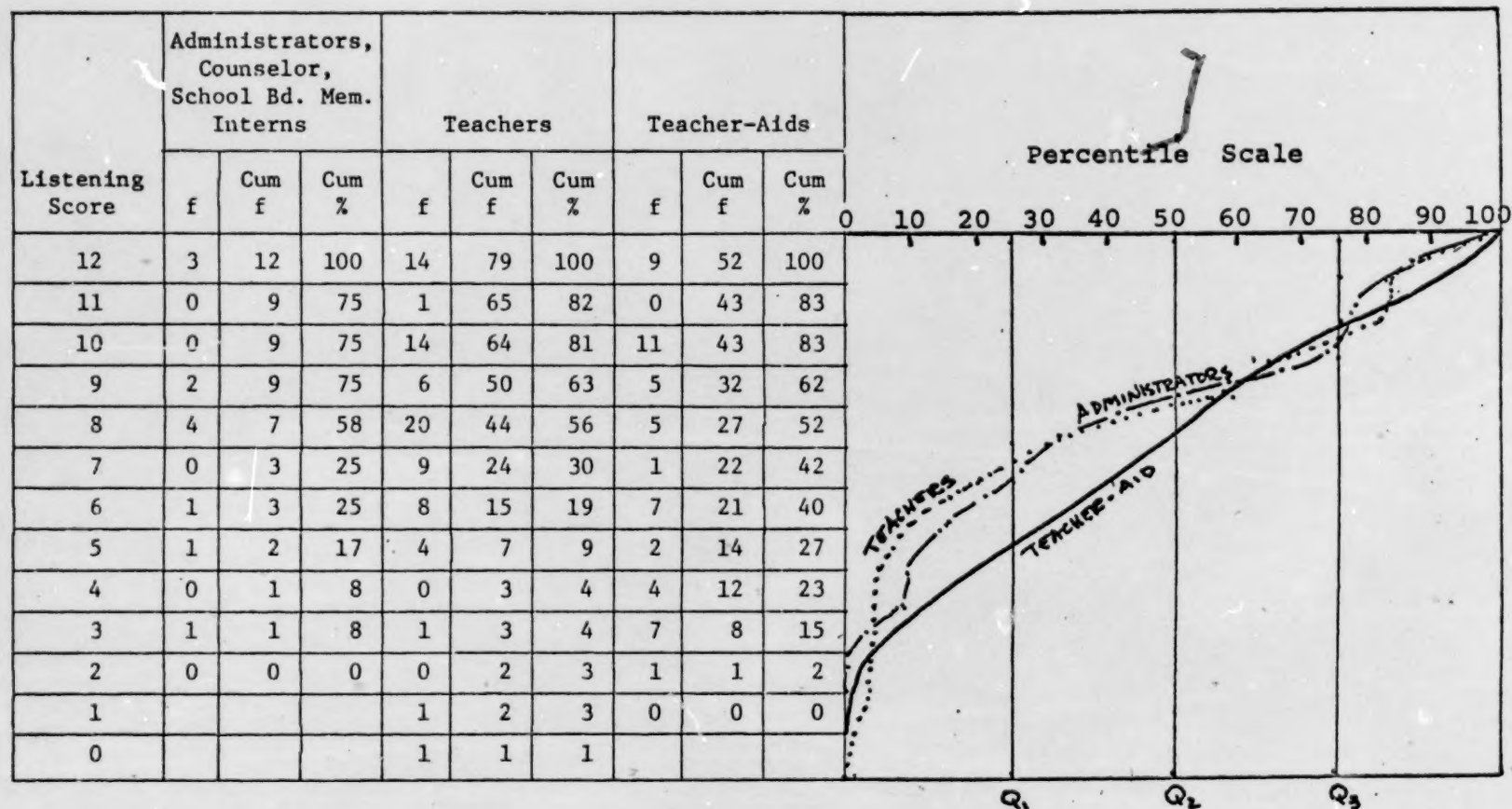


Figure 4. Total listening component scores for groups of educational personnel.

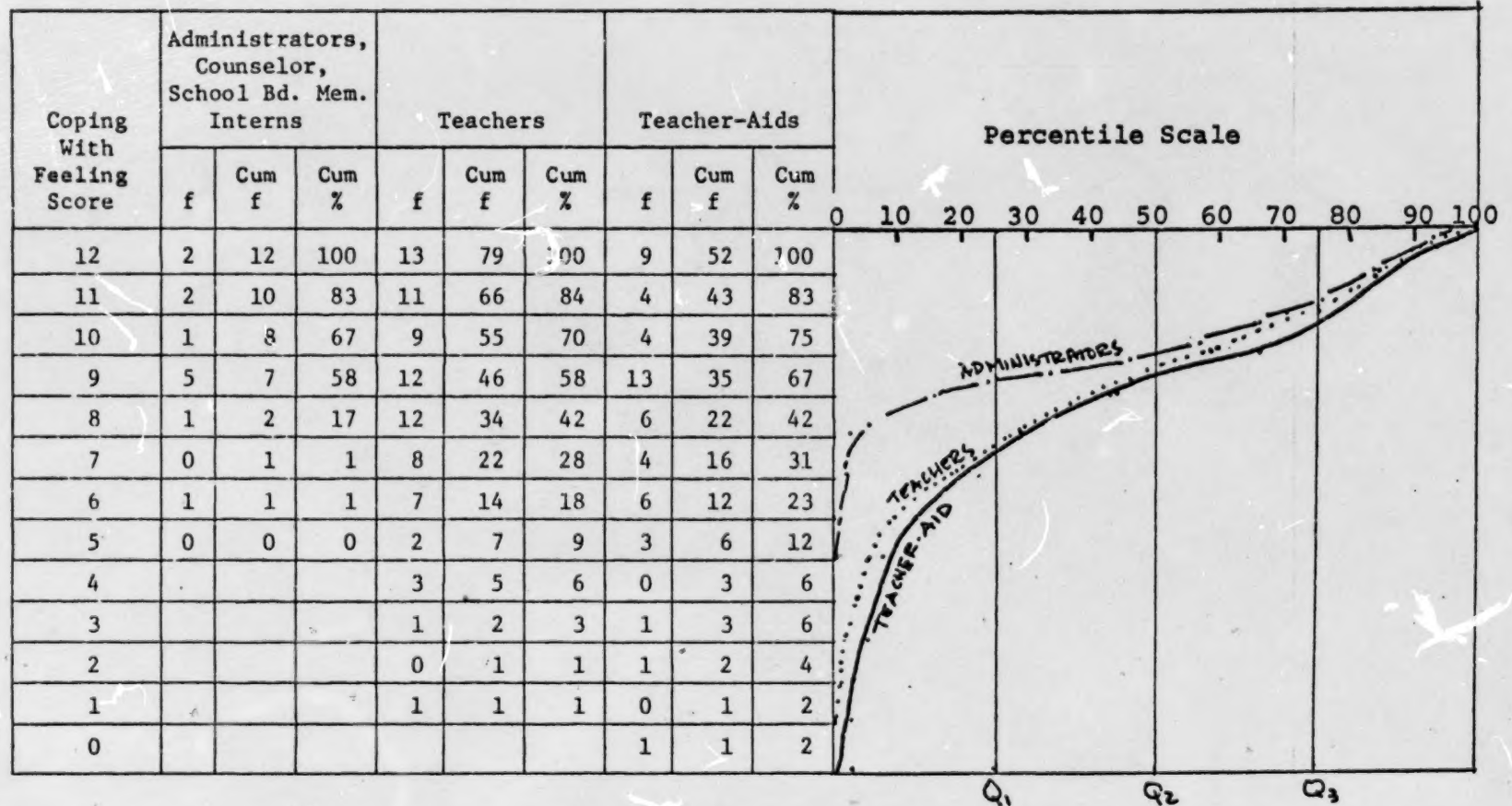


Figure 5. Total coping with feeling component scores for groups of educational personnel.

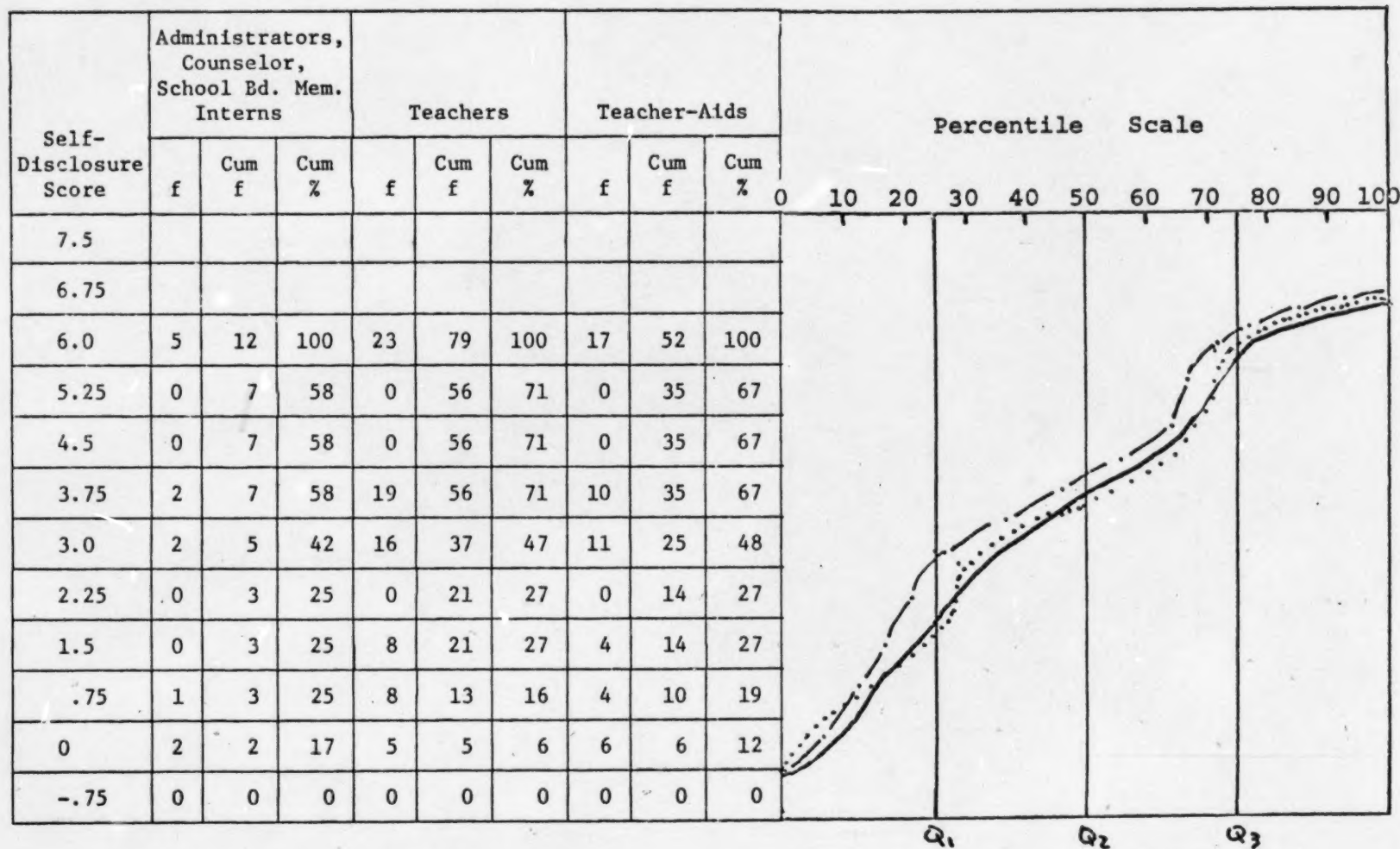


Figure 6. Total self-disclosure component scores for groups of educational personnel.

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